You Asked

Perplexity pplx_pro

Here is a **chronological list of major 20th-century Fundamentalist / Fundamentalist-adjacent authors** who explicitly tied maturity to doctrine, knowledge, discernment, or biblical understanding. I've kept this to authors whose published work or ministry material is commonly cited in that stream, and I've ordered them roughly by era of influence rather than by every individual publication date.[0][1]

Early Fundamentalist foundations

J. Gresham Machen — early 20th century. Machen is foundational for the idea that Christianity is defined by doctrinal truth rather than religious feeling, a move that helped make "maturity" inseparable from theological precision in conservative Protestantism. His anti-modernist posture in *Christianity and Liberalism* helped set the template for later Fundamentalist emphasis on doctrine as identity.[1][0]

B. B. Warfield — early 20th century. Warfield's influence on conservative Protestant thought reinforced the authority of Scripture and the intellectual seriousness of theology, which later Fundamentalists inherited as part of their understanding of Christian growth. While not usually quoted in the "maturity" formula itself, his legacy strongly shaped the doctrinal-intellectual framework behind it.[0][1]

J. C. Ryle — still widely read in Fundamentalist circles in the 20th century. Ryle is often cited for the idea that true Christianity is doctrinally informed and morally transformative, and his writings were used heavily by conservative evangelicals who equated spiritual seriousness with biblical understanding.[1][0]

Mid-century conservative evangelicalism

Carl F. H. Henry — 1940s through 1970s. Henry helped define evangelicalism as intellectually serious and doctrinally grounded, arguing that evangelical faith must be rationally coherent and biblically explicit rather than vague or emotional. His work made "theological clarity" a marker of maturity for many conservative evangelicals.[0][1]

Harold Lindsell — 1960s through 1980s. Lindsell's defense of biblical inerrancy strengthened the idea that doctrinal accuracy is central to spiritual fidelity. In that environment, maturity was frequently measured by one's ability to distinguish truth from error and to articulate sound doctrine.[1][0]

Francis A. Schaeffer — 1960s through 1980s. Schaeffer was not Fundamentalist in the strictest sense, but he deeply influenced conservative evangelical and Fundamentalist-adjacent readers by

insisting that Christians think carefully, coherently, and apologetically about truth. His work helped connect spiritual depth with intellectual and doctrinal seriousness.[0]

Late 20th-century Fundamentalist voices

John MacArthur — 1970s through 1990s and beyond. MacArthur is the clearest late-20th-century example of the thesis in explicit form. He writes that "the first is cognition," that "there is no premium on ignorance or naivete in sanctification," and that "the absence of biblical knowledge retards spiritual thinking and slows spiritual growth."[2]

R. C. Sproul — 1970s through 1990s. Sproul is more Reformed evangelical than strict Fundamentalist, but he strongly advanced the idea that wisdom and maturity require knowledge of God and doctrinal understanding. His line that "we cannot have wisdom without knowledge" is a concise summary of the logic.[3]

J. I. Packer — 1970s through 1990s. Packer's emphasis on theology as a means of communion with God helped reinforce the view that Christians mature as they gain a truer doctrinal grasp of God's character and ways. He is especially important as a bridge between doctrine and devotion.[4][5]

Theological trajectory

The core 20th-century trajectory runs like this: anti-modernist Fundamentalism insisted that Christianity stands or falls on doctrinal truth; mid-century evangelicalism retained that seriousness but added institutional and educational forms; late-century conservative teachers then translated the pattern into explicit claims that biblical knowledge, doctrinal discernment, and theological precision are marks of maturity.[2][1][0]

So if you are tracing the **genealogy of "maturity = doctrine/knowledge,"** the best historical arc is: **Machen and the early Fundamentalists -> Henry and inerrancy-driven evangelicalism -> Sproul/Packer as doctrinally serious formation writers -> MacArthur as the most explicit popularizer of the formula.**[3][4][2][1][0]